

REDUCING ANXIETY IN THE MOMENT AND BEYOND

>> ALLONNA SCOTT: Hello, everybody. Welcome to our Webinar. I will be one of your Moderators today along with Melanie Ordonez. Our guest speaker today is Kimberly Elias. I would like to go over brief housekeeping tips, things to know before we begin our session.

So, I do want to remind you that the best connection is to be hard-wired, versus being using Wi-Fi. Captions are provided throughout the session, so you can use the Closed Captioning by clicking at the top of the screen. You will see where it says CC, and then there is a dropdown area next to it. You can click on that button there, or the arrow there, and then select to show the captions. You are able to move the caption box around for your best viewing.

You can prove it around, reduce it if you like, and change the color, whatever your preference, if you are using it. There are no microphones activated, so, please use the Q&A Pod to the left of your screen to communicate with us. Just type in the box at the bottom of the Pod, then click the arrow next to it, and that will come directly to us.

Kim will answer as many questions as possible at the end of the presentation. And then we have the Chat and the Handout Pod. That is where you can download today's presentation. You will hover over the title, you will see an arrow pointing downward. You can click on that and it will download to your desktop and you can send it to wherever you would like in your folders, on your computer.

This session you can view in full screen mode. Press the VSC button on your keyboard. You can also do that if you intend to -- we have some pole questions today, so in order to participate with pole questions, or if you would like to enter a question in the Q&A, you will have to make sure your screen is minimized for that.

This Webinar will be recorded, and it will be available in two to three business days, so, we do understand everyone is quite busy, and sometimes we have to jump off.

Just so you are not missing anything, it will be available and you can contact your HR representative for that.

Because it is being recorded, I will go ahead and start that now. So, if you will stand by, you will see a little pop up at the top of the screen indicating it is recording.

(Recording in progress)

Okay, so, I will give my short introduction. I am Allonna Scott. Welcome to Reducing Anxiety in the Moment and Beyond. I am moderating, along with Melanie Ordonez and Amy D'Amico. And we have Kimberly Elias, a CHP coach at Magellan coach. She has an extensive background in coaching, and has helped many people with trauma and recovery, and also has many years of experience in business sale, marketing and education.

Her education includes a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, and a Master's Degree in Mind-Body Medicine.

Kim is a National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach in Certification and Lifestyle Medicine, Neurolinguistic Programming, mindful-based stress reduction, and trauma-informed coaching.

So, with that we know that Kim will be able to -- with that type of background she will be able to provide us a plethora of information and knowledge to help us with anxiety.

So, with that, Kim, I will go ahead and turn it over to you.

>> KIMBERLY ELIAS: Excellent. Thank you all for being here. I am excited to be here today, and to share with you what I hope is to be valuable information on how to manage anxiety in the moment and in the long-term.

Before I jump in, I want to thank the team that puts these Webinars together. Allonna, Melanie and Amy. Thank you so much for your hard work in making today happen.

I am truly honored to be with you all. Anxiety is something we have all experienced, and, unfortunately, chronic anxiety has become an end in today's world, especially since COVID. I often see this issue showing up in my coaching. That said, I really want you all to know that this topic is extremely important to me, and I hope that every single one of you today gains something from this Webinar.

So, let's go ahead and jump in. Today we are going to start by defining anxiety and identifying signs and symptoms. I am also going to share with you some tools and techniques to manage anxiety, and then we will take a deep dive into how to put these tools into a daily practice.

But before I go into the next slide, I do want to paint a scenario for you all, and ask you all a question.

Pretend you are at home and you are alone, and you are spending the day just relaxing and maybe doing some house chores.

And then you suddenly hear the doorbell run ring. What thoughts do you immediately have when you hear the doorbell? Go

ahead and share your answers now.

Oh, panic, anxiety, fear of a bad guy. Oh, yeah. Great. Thank you, guys. And you may be asking, why are you asking this question, Kim? To be honest with you, I was really curious about the content of your thoughts.

But what I really wanted to demonstrate to you here is how we as humans immediately go to a negative or anxiety thought.

Why is this important? Well, it is important because anxiety is created by our thinking, and how we perceive what is happening around us.

According to the American Psychological Association, anxiety is an emotion that is characterized by feelings of tension and worried thoughts.

As a result, the body will undergo physical changes like increased blood pressure. So, let's go back to that doorbell scenario for a moment.

If my initial thought was, oh, my gosh, the person at the door is a burglar, and then I chose not to answer the door, and I just hid, what I am doing is I am igniting that anxious thought and giving it permission to control the situation. If I continue to think about that anxious thought, and I just spend time with it, and buy into it, then what happens is I am creating anxiety. So, it is really important to point out here the doorbell was not the cause of the threat and anxiety, but it was actually our thinking about that doorbell and how we perceived the situation that caused the anxiety.

This distinction is necessary when learning how to manage anxiety, and we will talk about that a little bit later in the presentation.

I also want to make sure that we are all clear and understand just because we have moments of feeling anxious, that does not mean we have a mental illness or disorder.

Anxiety disorders are different from normal states of anxiousness. Anxiety disorders are typically characterized by excessive fears and anxious state that impair one's ability to perform daily life functions. If you think you have an anxiety disorder, I would encourage you to seek out a professional and get an assessment completed.

So, now we are going to look at the difference between the difference between anxiety and stress. I think this is imperative to make this distinction between stress and anxiety, main because these terms are used interchangeably and loosely all of the time.

You might hear someone say, oh, that made me feel so anxious, or I was so stressed when I had to give that

presentation. Yes, stress and anxiety look similar, and they are connected. They are not the same thing. Stress is a physical anxiety that is usually short-term and may create a stress response like fight, flight or freeze.

I will tell you an example. One time I was walking my dog on a trail near my house. Suddenly I saw a rattlesnake and it caused me and my dog to jump two feet in the air and start running. I am not kidding. It was scary. My hearts we beating heavily and so was my breathing and I actually started to shake a little bit.

This is an example of stress. After 20 more minutes of walking I was feeling better and felt calm.

Anxiety, understand, does not need an immediate external trigger, and anxiety often lingers. It usually starts with a negative thought. If that negative thought persists, changes in the body will occur. The mind and the body are powerfully connected.

Our thoughts with impact our physiology, and sensations in the body can have an impact on our brains, and how we think.

Actually, did you know there are studies that show negative thinking can actually weaken your immune system, and your brain is constantly scanning your body for stress.

It is true. And this is another reason why it is important to learn how to manage our thinking and our anxious thoughts.

So, now we have gotten to what I think is the most important part of this Webinar, and that is the "how to." Before I dive into this material, I just would like to invite us all to engage in a two-minute self-check-in practice.

This practice is something you can use to assess your anxiety, and how you are feeling throughout the day. And for the sake of what we are talking about today, anxiety, we will kind of rate that right now.

So, I would like us all to engage by, first, stop whatever you are doing, and just get comfortable and take a deep breath in.

Now I just in invite you to check-in with yourself and ask the question, how calm or anxious am I? How do I feel? I am going to ask to you rate this on a scale of 1 to 10. With 10 being extremely anxious, and 1 being calm and relaxed. Where do you fall on this scale?

Go ahead and type your answers in the Chat Box now. Where do you fall? Oh, 8, 8, 7, 6, 6. Okay. Some of you are really calm and some of you are feeling fairly anxious.

Now, the second part of this question or exercise, shall I say -- the second part of the self-check-in practice is to

check-in with your body. Now that we checked in emotionally, we will check in physically.

So, stop what you are doing and take a deep breath, and engage in is a body scan. Sit quietly for a moment, and pay attention to how your body feels. Scan from the top of your head down to your toes. Notice any sensations.

What are you feeling? What sensations are you feeling in your body? Go ahead and type that in the Chat Box for me now. What sensations do you notice, if any. Pain, tightness. Wow, guys. A lot of us are feeling tight and stressed, hungry, low back ache, tight shoulders, flustered, tingling. Okay. Dizzy. Tense. Okay.

So, now that we have noticed how we feel emotionally and physically, I want you to connect the two. For example, if someone was feeling highly anxious, they may feel some sensations or tightness in their body.

They might even feel nauseous. And the purpose of having you engage in this self-check-in practice, is really to give you a sample of how you can assess how you feel, and then decide what appropriate action needs to be taken.

We will talk about that here shortly.

Now we get to get into the "how to." Let's talk about how we can manage anxiety in the moment and in the long-term.

I will share with you here some top-down approaches. Top-down approaches include using the top parts of our brains like the prefrontal cortex to make changes in how we think and how we feel in our bodies.

So, in other words, we will start with the brain to make changes in how we process information, and to make changes in our body.

These tools I am getting ready to introduce to you will help you manage your anxiety by creating a shift in the way you think about the anxiety, and how you relate to your anxious thoughts. And these cognitive strategies are strategies that you are going to need to use consistently and as much as possible in order for them to really get their full benefit and to help you. Okay?

But first I have to emphasize that in order for these tools to be effective, we have to develop a new mindset on how we see anxiety.

Many of us fear anxiety and see it as bad for us, but the truth is, anxiety can be seen as good. And it does not need to be feared.

Remember, emotions are a natural part of being human, and they can guide us to solutions, and navigating how we move

forward in life. I want you to think of anxiety as nothing more than a signal to clarify if we are safe or not. It can help us solve problems, and it can create safety for us.

Another way of looking at anxiety is to see it as a communicator. It is a learning view that some kind of action needs to be taken or something needs to be addressed.

So, anxiety can actually be seen as our friend if we use to it move us forward instead of holding us back.

This idea of seeing it as our friend is called externalization. When we see anxiety as something that exists outside of us, we are able to work with it and manage it.

I also want you to know that if you fear anxiety, the outcome is only more anxiety, and if there is anything you take away from today's Webinar, it is that.

Anxiety -- fearing it, resisting it -- can actually make it worse, okay?

So, when we fear anxiety and see it as bad, we teach our brain to become threatened by it, and it only makes it worse.

So, with that said, it is really important that we develop this growth mindset about anxiety. It can serve us, it can teach us, and it can actually propel us forward if we develop the right mindset and our relationship with it.

This may seem like a radical idea, but instead of trying to cope with anxiety, how about we just try to relate to it differently?

As a matter of fact, when we try to cope with the anxiety, the message we send to our brain is that anxiety is scary and bad, and, therefore, in order to protect us, our brains remember this messaging, and the anxiety will just increase.

And that is why, as you noticed in my presentation title, it wasn't how to cope with anxiety. It was how to manage it.

We literally can teach our brains to have anxiety about our anxiety.

So, instead of asking how can I get rid of my anxiety, try changing the question to: How can I get better at managing and relating to my anxiety, so it doesn't take charge of my life?

Or, how can I increase my ability to accept anxiety, and tolerate it, so that I can get on with the things that truly matter to me?

Or -- I really like this one -- how can I increase my competence in doing things despite my anxiety?

You see, anxiety will never go away. It will always exist as long as we are human. It is an emotion that comes and goes, just like sadness, anger or frustration.

So, if we can become willing to accept it as a part of our

lives, and develop this new mindset around it, it will lose its power over us.

If anything, remember this: Anxiety is the way that the body and brain communicate to us that something needs to be addressed. And with all that said, the first step to changing your mindset and how you relate to anxiety is the most important, and when we are able to work with it, and not fight with it, that is key.

Because what you resist will persist. Okay.

So, let me go dig into some of these cognitive strategies. We just went through mindset. Now we are going to look at reframing the way we talk about anxiety. That is actually helpful in developing a new relationship with anxiety.

So, instead of saying things like, oh, my gosh, I am so anxious right now. You could actually reframe that thought to: Oh, I am so excited right now! As a matter of fact, anxiety and excitement have the same physiological response in the body.

For example, I could say that I was really anxious about doing this Webinar, but, instead, I chose to see myself excited about it. And I chose to do the Webinar despite my anxiety, or despite my excitement, because I value teaching others, more than I value my anxious thoughts. Okay?

The next one, discerning actual danger with perceived danger. This is so fundamental to managing anxiety. And, really, not allowing anxiety to control you.

So, what you are going to do is, you are going to discern if the thought that you have is actually real danger, or just perceived danger.

So, remember the doorbell scenario. The doorbell was not the real threat or the danger. It was just how we thought about it and our perception of it? Here is another example. Have you ever watched that Scooby Doo cartoon when you were a kid? Remember that scene when Scooby saw a shadow on the wall and it looks like a big, scary monster and Scooby was shaking with fear. And on the floor was a tiny little mouse. The mouse was not a real threat, but Scooby perceived it that way only because of the shadow.

So, it is really important you get good at discerning whether you are in real danger, or if you are having a thought that is perceived danger. Because, if you are able to see the perception in it, you are more likely to take action, and allow the anxiety to dissipate.

It is also important to know that when you avoid things, because they are perceived as scary, dangerous or threatening, avoidance actually teaches your brain to associate that thing

with a threat. And your anxiety will continue to increase. Because now you are sending the message to your brain that that is a real threat. That is real danger.

So, the best thing that you can do is to acknowledge your anxious thought, acknowledge the perceived danger, and then take action anyway, because it is not real.

Remember this. The quality of life is not diminished due to anxiety. It is diminished because we avoid doing the things that stop -- to stop the anxious thoughts.

I am going to give you a quick example of that. Someone who really wants to find a partner in their life, but they don't date, because of their fear of rejection and they get anxious about how they will be perceived.

Or, for example, someone who wants to be an actor, or an actress. That is -- they know that is their calling and passion in life, but they never go on the audition, because their anxiety keeps them stuck.

So, remember that. We have to not avoid things if it is perceived danger.

Now, I am going to get to that. I saw the question pop up about worry and worrying, and now we are going to get to that. so, distinguishing the worry from the worrying. What does that mean?

Well, worrying is actually something that is in our control. However, the initial worry thought is something that just pops into our minds and it pops into our minds suddenly.

So, when we notice a worry thought pop into our minds, we then can decide if we want to spend time with it, if we want to camp out with it, or even marry it, right? Some of us like to marry our worry thoughts.

And when we choose to do that, what happens is we get into excessive worrying. And when we do that, we get into anxiety.

So, how do you manage that? Well, when you notice that initial worry thought pop into your mind, that is a moment for you to decide if you are going to dismiss that thought, or if you are going to spend time with it.

You may even ask yourself, is this a thought that I can do something about? If not, then don't spend any time with it. Or, you might ask, is this a thought that is helpful to me? If it is not helpful, then dismiss it. Okay.

So, now we are going to talk about challenging anxious thoughts and reframing them.

So, when I talk about challenging anxious thoughts and reframing them, really coming from a cognitive behavioral therapy approach in terms of challenging our thoughts, okay.

That is one strategy of that approach. What we will do, we will notice a negative or anxious thought come into our head, or we might have a cluster of anxious thoughts, and we are going to ask: Are these thoughts really true? Or am I just making up a story in my head? Is there real danger here? Or am I perceiving it in a faulty way?

When we challenge our negative and anxious thoughts, they can quickly lose their power. Additionally, we can use those anxious thoughts as a reminder to get to the truth of the matter, and to take a step into a more positive, soothing, uplifting thought.

So, practice questioning these anxious thoughts. Challenge them. Okay?

And the next cognitive strategy is learning how to separate yourself from the anxious thought, and not buy into it.

And this is called cognitive diffusion. Okay? Cognitive diffusion is not seeing the thought as a part of you, but as just something that exists and is separated from you.

So, I will give you an example. So, let's say you have a thought that pops into your head that says, I am lazy. A better way to think about that thought is to say -- or a way to separate yourself from that thought -- is to say, I am having the thought that I am lazy. So, you are not owning that thought. You are not buying into it. You are just noticing that you had that thought. And once you are able to notice that, then you can do something about it.

You can either engage in it or you can dismiss it.

So, with cognitive diffusion, we look at our thoughts and we notice them, but we don't see through our thoughts. And I can clarify that a little later, if you all have questions about that.

But, really, it is learning to separate yourself from the thoughts. And this is going to lead to the understanding that anxious thoughts are not facts. And feeling are not facts. Therefore, we don't need to give them all the power. We get to decide what we want to give our attention to. We get to manage our thoughts, instead of letting our thoughts manage us. Okay?

Before I jump into my final cognitive strategy, I would like to ask you all a question. By a raise of hands, how many of you have ever heard of scheduled worry time? How many of you have ever heard of scheduled worry time?

Well, this may seem like a radical strategy, however, I can tell you there are many people who have tried this and found it to be a game-changer for them. Okay? So, I want to introduce you to scheduling your time for worry. Yes, that is right. You

heard me. You actually take time out of your day to worry. You are thinking, what? That is crazy! This standard allows you to teach your brain the appropriate boundaries for your anxious thoughts. Kind of like training a puppy to do its business outside, you are training your brain to worry only within a certain set of boundaries.

This way worrying does not hijack your day. The scheduled time for worrying can occur at a time that is best for you.

I usually say at the end of the day for you, after you put your kids to bed. Or if you don't have kids, after dinner, you are done with your workday.

You will set a timer and I would say an appropriate time for worry time would be 10 minutes. During this time, you will sit and you will have a piece of paper and a pen, and you will write down every single worry you have. Keeping in mind you are not there to solve your worries, but you are there only to think of them and write them down.

As soon as the timer goes off, you stop, and go and do something like watch your favorite show, or take a bubble bath. Keep in mind, this strategy needs to be practiced consistently at the same time each day.

You can't do it at different times of the day, or it won't work. It has to be consistent, at the same time each day for 10 minutes. And it must be done consecutively for at least 21 days for you to see results.

I would love, love, love for you guys to try this. I heard so many people tell me it helped them.

Okay. Now that we have gotten through these top-down strategies, we are going to look at bottom-up approaches. And contrary to top-down approaches, these bottom-up approaches start with using the body to make changes in the brain. Okay?

These approaches are used for those moments when you are feeling very anxious and you need a tool in the moment. Okay?

The top-up approach -- I am sorry, the top-down approaches -- are tools that can be used in the long-term. They will take time, but these bottom-up approaches are for those moments where you are just anxious and you need to get into a calm state.

I want you to keep in mind that these bottom-up approaches need to be started with the mindset. You know, not getting upset when you notice the anxiety. Not resisting it, not fearing it. Okay? Remember, the mindset starts first. We have to relate to the anxiety.

We notice it is there, we welcome it, we accept it, and then we move into one of these bottom-up tools.

Remember, we don't want to train our brain that the anxiety is something threatening or will hurt us, otherwise we will get more anxiety. So, we simply notice it, we accept it, and then we take action by doing one of these techniques. The first one is diaphragmatic breathing. It is the most effective because the diaphragm is the most efficient muscle for breathing. During the diaphragmatic breathing, you use your diaphragm to take deep breaths, and when you breathe normally you are not usually using your lungs to full capacity. That is why diaphragmatic breathing is awesome because it allows you to use your lungs at 100%.

This breathing technique offers several benefits to your body including lowering blood pressure, and communicating to the brain to calm down.

When you have the monkey mind and are going haywire, top-down approaches may not work. Try doing this instead.

Progressive muscle relaxation. This technique teaches you to relax your muscles through a two-step process. You tense particular muscle groups in your body such as your neck, legs, shoulders, arms, and then hold that tension for at least 30 seconds or more, and then release. Notice how your muscles feel when you relax them.

This will help you reduce your overly levels of tension and get you in a more relaxed state.

It also helps improve sleep. Other alternatives to progressive muscle relaxation are wall presses and prayer stance resistance techniques.

These both create tension within the body, and also relaxes your muscles.

So, in the wall press technique, what you are going to do is stand at a diagonal, or 45-degree angle position. You will extend your arms out, and your palms are going to press against a wall.

Then you are going to take a deep inhale, and press against the wall like you are going to move it across the earth.

Keep pressing as long as you can, and then release. Do this a few times and you will definitely feel calmer.

The prayer stance is also creating resistance through using your hands.

So, you place your hands together in a prayer position, press them together as hard as you can, then release. Do this as many times as needed until you find your desired calm state.

Tapping works to regulate our nervous system. It is also known as emotional freedom technique. There is a lot of literature out there. All of these bottom-up techniques, if you

research them, you will find a lot of information, and even YouTube videos on how to use them.

Tapping the neck, the base of the head, the area around your ears, your temples, your chest. All these points the body have been found to be sensitive to tapping and help you release tension.

So, tapping is great as a supplement to some of these other techniques, and can help bring you some immediate relief to anxiety.

Also, walking is a great way, especially if you are in nature. I love it! And don't forget the value of self-massage. We don't always have time to run to the masseuse, and we may not have a partner, but we do have two hands and there are several videos on YouTube that can show you some self-massage techniques for the head, neck, behind the ears, that can be very relaxing.

All right, guys. We are almost to the finish line. I want to tell you we really need to look at our lifestyle, habits and practices. Getting quality sleep. Exercise is a great way to release anxiety. Avoiding or limit coffee. Limit processed foods sugar and alcohol. Avoid or limit Social Media. That can really promote anxious thinking. Medication is a practice, not a coping skill. I do not advise that for people in the moment. If you try to meditate, it can worsen things. Meditation is more of a practice and not a coping skill, but if you do practice it daily, it can help.

I would really encourage you to continue to do your hobbies and socially connect, even despite your anxious thoughts.

Social connections, hobbies, journaling and getting into nature, walking maybe outside as much as possible.

All right, I will open up the Q&A now and I would love to answer any questions that you all might have. Go ahead and ask. I am here. We have about 5 minutes.

I have met people that I worked with who have had pain. They actually reframe that word, and instead of saying pain, they say sensation, because it is a more neutral word. It may be that you have to do some work around acceptance of that pain, and learning how to relate to it in a different way.

And I am here in coaching. If you want to get help with that, I am here. Go to your HR and sign up for coaching. I would be happy to help you with that.

I would like to go ahead and answer some more of these.

I have extreme travel anxiety, and would like advice. Okay, again, I would say going and looking at what is it about the travel that is causing you anxiety? What are your thoughts about

that? And is there real danger there, or is it just perceived danger?

If it is perceived, then I would say really working through that, and maybe connecting with someone who can maybe do a little bit of exposure therapy with you in terms of, like, taking baby steps toward traveling, but not avoiding it.

If you avoid it, what happens is you actually create more anxiety around that. Okay.

How do you tamper down a panic attack? Great question, John. First of all, I want you to know that no one has ever died from a panic attack. A panic attack is being in a stress response on full-throttle, and your body is reacting. If you can calmly notice the sensations, eventually they will pass.

You can either walk through it, breathe through it. But whatever you do, do not resist it, and do not be afraid of it, because that will just make those symptoms worse.

So, a lot of this anxiety, panic attack, all of these types of questions, the fundamental key is learning that your relationship to this is hugely important. If you are afraid of it, if you are resisting it or fearing it, it is only going to get worse.

So, just know you are okay. You just have to breathe. You have to disengage from those anxious thoughts. Notice that they are there, but don't embrace them. Don't buy into them. Okay?

Slowly those symptoms will start to dissipate. Okay.

>> ALLONNA SCOTT: Thank you, Kim. Thank you for the information. I wish we could get to all the questions. There are so many but unfortunately time doesn't allow it. Kim, we appreciate the excellent, informative presentation you have given us today. Before we end, I would like to remind everyone that your program is here to help you.

You and your family members. If you want more information on this topic or other health and wellness topics, please feel free to contact your program. And, remember, your program is here for you and your family. Every one of us has a challenge to juggle life struggles. With the program, we can help you get through that.

Also, we just want to remind you that the individuals you are talking to, they are community experts here to support you. Your information is held confidential, and there are a lot of perks to your program. So, please take a look at.

>> KIMBERLY ELIAS: Yes, I would like to say thank you for attending. Feel free to get into coaching. We are all highly skilled in working with this issue. Thank you so much for being here, everyone.

>> ALLONNA SCOTT: Thank you, Kim. Yes. Please, we ask that you take this time to write your satisfaction -- overall satisfaction -- of today's Webinar. And we also appreciate any feedback that you can give us on how to improve or any topics that you would like to hear.

Also, at the bottom of the screen, the handout session is there so that you can download today's presentation. If you are in need of a Certificate of Completion, we have the link there for you to do so, as well.

Thank you, everyone. I will stop the recording.

That concludes our session for today. Thank you.